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Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

Economic and environmental questions: human settlements

Coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

At its 43rd plenary meeting, on 26 July 2001, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 2001/22 entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda". The present report is submitted pursuant to the invitation extended to the Secretary-General in paragraph 4 of resolution 2001/22 to report to the Council at its substantive session of 2002 on the implementation of that resolution.

The General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, having taken note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/618) entitled "Options for reviewing and strengthening the mandate and status of the Commission on Human Settlements and the status, role and function of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)", decided, in its resolution 56/206 entitled "Strengthening the mandate and status of the Commission on Human Settlements and the status, role and functions of

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** The document was submitted late to the conference services without the explanation required under paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 B, by which the Assembly decided that, if a report is submitted late, the reason should be included in a footnote to the document.

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the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)", section I.A, to transform, with effect from 1 January 2002, the Commission into the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, to be known as UN-Habitat, a subsidiary organ of the Assembly. In section I.B of the same resolution, the Assembly also decided to transform, with effect from 1 January 2002, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) into the secretariat of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The transformation has enabled UN-Habitat to participate in the meeting of the Chief Executives Board of the United Nations System for Coordination, which is the highest-level inter-agency coordinating mechanism within the United Nations system.

At its resumed substantive session of 2001, the Economic and Social Council, after having considered the recommendation of the Commission on Human Settlements in its resolution 18/1 concerning the establishment of the Committee of Permanent Representatives as an intersessional subsidiary body of the Commission, approved the establishment of the Committee (Council resolution 2001/48 of 24 October 2001). In its resolution 56/206, the General Assembly decided that the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UN-Habitat should serve as the Governing Council's intersessional subsidiary body.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council held discussions on human settlements under agenda sub-item 13 (d) at its 41st, 42nd and 43rd meetings, on 25 and 26 July 2001. The Council had before it the report of the Commission on Human Settlements on its eighteenth session[1] and the report of the Secretary-General (E/2001/62) on the implementation of agreed conclusions 2000/1 of the coordination segment of the Council on the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda. At its 43rd meeting on 26 July, the Council adopted resolution 2001/22 entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda". At its resumed substantive session of 2001, the Council, after having considered the recommendation of the Commission in its resolution 18/1[2] concerning the establishment of the Committee of Permanent Representatives as an intersessional subsidiary body of the Commission, approved the establishment of the Committee (Council resolution 2001/48 of 24 October 2001).

2. In its resolution 2001/22, the Economic and Social Council reiterated the need for the participation of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), in light of UN-Habitat's role as focal point in the United Nations system on implementing the Habitat Agenda,[3] in all aspects of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) (renamed the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in Council decision 2001/321 of 24 October 2001) and its subsidiary machinery. In the same resolution the Council looked forward to the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on options for reviewing and strengthening the mandate and status of the Commission on Human Settlements and the status, role and function of the Centre, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Assembly and the Council and decisions of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). Also in resolution 2001/22, the Council invited the Secretary-General to establish, within the framework of CEB and in accordance with paragraph 66 of the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium,[4] adopted by the Assembly at its twenty-fifth special session, the Habitat Agenda Task Manager System in order to allow better monitoring and mutual reinforcement of actions taken by international agencies in support of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda; and also invited the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Council at its substantive session of 2002 on the implementation of resolution 2001/22.

I. Progress on implementation

3. The report of the Secretary-General (A/56/618) on options for reviewing and strengthening the mandate and status of the Commission on Human Settlements and the status, role and function of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, was prepared pursuant to the invitation extended to the Secretary-General in paragraph 67 of the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, to report to the Assembly thereon.

4. The General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, having taken note of the above-mentioned report, decided to transform, in its resolution 56/206 entitled "Strengthening the mandate and status of the Commission on Human Settlements and the status, role and functions of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)", the Commission on Human Settlements into the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, to be known as UN-Habitat, a subsidiary organ of the Assembly; and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) into the secretariat of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The Governing Council will retain the present membership and functions of the Commission on Human Settlements; its members will be elected by the Council and report to the Assembly through the Council, with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UN-Habitat serving as the Governing Council's intersessional subsidiary body.

5. The Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme welcomed the decision of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to formalize the Committee as an intersessional subsidiary body of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The Committee has already had four regular meetings since its formalization in October 2001 as the intersessional subsidiary body of

the Governing Council of UN-Habitat. From nominees proposed by the chairs of the regional groups, the Committee elected its Bureau for the year 2002. Main actions taken in the meetings included approval of the Committee's programme of work for the year 2002, the priorities of UN-Habitat for the period 1 January 2002-5 May 2003, and preparations for the first session of the World Urban Forum held in Nairobi from 29 April to 3 May 2002.

6. In its resolution 56/206, the General Assembly also confirmed that the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) should be responsible for the management of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, with due regard to the terms of reference of the Foundation as stipulated in Assembly resolution 3327 (XXIX); and encouraged the Executive Director to strengthen the Foundation in order to achieve its primary objective of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, including supporting shelter, related infrastructure development programmes and housing finance institutions, particularly in developing countries. As a follow-up, UN-Habitat presented a draft report on the Foundation to the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme at its meeting held on 12 March 2002. In the same resolution, the Assembly invited all Governments to increase their contributions to the Foundation resources; and also requested the Secretary-General to continue to support the Programme through the provision of adequate regular budget resources.

7. With regard to policy coordination, the General Assembly, in its resolution 56/206, reaffirmed that the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, together with the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), constituted the three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism to oversee the coordination of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The transformation of UN-Habitat to a programme does not prefigure any changes in the mandate, membership and modus operandi of the Governing Council. However, the Governing Council will now be in a position to strengthen its cooperation with the Council and other bodies of the United Nations and to strengthen its capacity to discharge its mandate.

8. In its resolution 56/206, the General Assembly welcomed the fact that UN-Habitat, as United Nations focal point for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, would participate in CEB at all levels of its machinery. The Executive Director of UN-Habitat participated in the first regular session of CEB, held in Rome on 10 and 11 April 2002, and in the meeting of the High-level Committee on Programmes and other coordination machinery of the United Nations system. By participating in CEB, UN-Habitat is expected to become fully effective in discharging its mandate of coordinating the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and to forge inter-agency partnerships on shelter and sustainable human settlements development. This will also promote the visibility, attention and support that human settlements require as a cross-sectoral dimension of development.

9. The General Assembly, in its resolution 56/206, also emphasized the role and importance of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda in the activities and programmes of the United Nations system at the country level with particular reference to the common country assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), as well as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) process led by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The Habitat Agenda Task Manager System, headed by UN-Habitat and involving all relevant agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, should ensure adequate monitoring of progress in implementing the wide range of recommendations and commitments in the Habitat Agenda and should be linked to the monitoring and planning mechanisms of the CCA and UNDAF.

10. UN-Habitat can enhance the ability of the resident coordinator system to offer more effective service by providing expertise, in collaboration with UNDP, for policy advice and technical assistance on adequate shelter and sustainable urban development at the country level. It is foreseen that this will lead to a more productive collaboration with United Nations agencies, programmes and funds and country teams in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. This could also encourage all members of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), other United Nations programmes, funds, organizations and agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions to support regional, national and local urban observatories, networks and capacity-building institutions and to incorporate shelter and sustainable human settlements development into CCAs, UNDAFs and PRSPs.

11. The function of UN-Habitat could be strengthened by identifying and increasing synergies in policy and operational activities related to shelter and sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world. The General Assembly, in resolution 53/242 of 28 July 1999, supported the proposal for the establishment of an Environmental Management Group in order to enhance inter-agency coordination in the field of environment and human settlements. Within the framework of the Environmental Management Group, issue-specific working groups have been established to address cross-cutting issues of common concern to organizations in the United Nations system. The proposed Habitat Agenda Task Manager System would therefore be well placed in this framework and function as a working group on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, headed by the secretariat of UN-Habitat. Additional efforts will also be made to expand partnership initiatives with organizations in the United Nations system (such as the Cities Alliance in cooperation with the World Bank).

12. At its eighteenth session, the Commission on Human Settlements, in its resolution 18/5,[5] requested the Executive Director of UN-Habitat to promote a merger of the Urban Environment Forum and the International Forum on Urban Poverty into a new Urban Forum. This has been supported by General Assembly resolution 56/206. As noted in paragraph 5 above, the first session of the World Urban Forum was held in Nairobi from 29 April to 3 May 2002. The Forum was an open-ended gathering of experts, placing strong emphasis on the participation of Habitat Agenda partners. Its main focus was on sustainable urbanization, the main contribution of UN-Habitat to the preparatory process of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and on eliminating overlaps and identifying synergies among development agencies in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

13. The newly established UN-Habitat would also consolidate the considerable progress achieved in promoting coordination among, and a stronger role for, local authorities and major groups of civil society in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. This may include more effective mainstreaming of cities and local authorities and their organizations in the work of the United Nations, as solicited with regard to institution-building in post-conflict societies; and a broader reach for the UN-Habitat Advisory Committee of Local Authorities.

14. It is expected that the newly established UN-Habitat would increase its participation in the ongoing dialogue with donors on the revision of approaches with respect to aid to United Nations programmes and funds and enrich the effectiveness of international cooperation through the horizontal dimension of human settlements development.

II. Recommendations

15. **The millennium development goal of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by the year 2020, which is central to the Habitat Agenda adopted in Istanbul in June 1996, poses a major challenge to UN-Habitat and to the whole United Nations family.**

16. **One of the central functions of UN-Habitat is to provide advisory services and implement human settlements programmes at the request of member States. This function has been performed over a period of 20 years through projects and programmes, including the Urban Management Programme, the Disaster Management Programme and the Cities Alliance, and continues to be the most visible and direct evidence the contribution of UN-Habitat to sustainable development. It is, however, severely limited by the decreasing flow of resources available for technical cooperation and is characterized by an increasing proportion of tied contributions.**

17. **Efforts should therefore be made to enhance the operational role of UN-Habitat for a more productive and effective collaboration with the agencies; to diversify sources of financing for technical cooperation projects and programmes; and to identify new avenues for inter-agency collaboration. The General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session also supported the proposal for revitalization, through partnerships with international development banks and other finance institutions, of the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, originally created as a revolving fund to support, inter alia, selected shelter and human settlements programmes in the developing countries and the strengthening of housing finance institutions. Strengthening the Foundation will make the funding and activities of UN-Habitat more predictable and prevent its programmes and projects from experiencing excessive and disruptive**

volatility. A slum upgrading facility is being designed as a global source of seed capital for investment in housing and infrastructure development, in support of the millennium development goal on slum upgrading. This facility would complement the work of the Foundation by leveraging public and private resources at global and national levels.

18. **UN-Habitat could play a more forward-looking role, as a catalytic centre of excellence in addressing new challenges and promoting new partnerships and facilitating contacts and cooperation, including information exchange and policy support to Habitat Agenda partners at the international, national and local levels.**

19. **UN-Habitat should also promote the recognition of cities and local authorities and their world associations as partners of the United Nations in the quest for a safer and better world and enhance the dialogue among Governments at all levels and Habitat Agenda partners on all issues related to effective decentralization and the strengthening of local authorities.**

20. **UN-Habitat should strengthen its support to non-governmental organizations in their advocacy work and, in particular, strengthen operational partnerships with selected civil society coalitions and identify new strategies for the involvement of the private sector in public-private partnerships for slum upgrading and sustainable human settlements development.**

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 8* (A/56/8).

[2] Ibid., annex I, sect. A.

[3] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[4] General Assembly resolution S-25/2, annex.

[5] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 8* (A/56/8), annex I, sect. B.